

Testimony To The Transportation Committee - 2/25/2013

Senate Bill 637 proposes the use of mobile videographers to capture video evidence of distracted driving for official review and subsequent ticketing through the mail.

Why I am for S.B. 637

We have a serious distracted driving problem here in Connecticut. I'm sure we all have our stories of near misses with inattentive drivers. I'm sorry to say the problem will only get worse. As new gadgets capable of more electronic wizardry enter the market every day, and as these devices insinuate themselves into our every waking moment, captivating our minds and our eyes, they will only increase their command of our attention given our constant 'need' to stay connected and informed, entertained and amused. Worse yet, the youngest drivers are the most vulnerable. They have grown up with these devices as their playmates and companions, distractors and communicators.

There are other bills before this committee which proposed higher penalties for distracted driving violations. I agree with them, but increased fines *alone* are not going to solve this serious problem. Increased fines *along with enhanced enforcement*, however, *will* start to make a dent in this epidemic. But who will help enforce this? The police are already stretched too thin to conquer this epidemic alone, and personally, I believe they should be reserved more for matters that require their unique training and specialized skills.

So how do we fix this? Using teams of mobile videographers in addition to police solves this as well as many other problems. For one, it keeps officers safer by not having them standing vulnerably at the side of the road while issuing tickets. And in the time and officer spots an infraction, catches up to the driver, calls in the plate, writes the ticket and retakes his or her position, a videographer could have easily captured ten or so video clips of violators, and far more economically. Subsequently issuing a ticket through the mail also reduces the problem for some officers who may be less likely to enforce the fines face to face.

Using videographers will also create jobs, most likely hundreds of jobs, which are still sorely needed in our state. Many of these new hires can be found from job re-training programs. These newly trained videographers can also be deployed to observe the most dangerous or particularly troublesome locations. And, by not being constrained to urban centers, videographers can sample a wider and unbiased cross-section of roadways and offenders. This element of flexibility to target hot-spots or to randomly sample traffic infractions will lead to the best reductions in distracted driving and likelihood of accidents.

I humbly submit that this bill's language be amended to include ticketing of those not only visibly texting or using their phone, but also those who are staring down into their laps for more than some reasonable amount of time. I think this violation will fall under the "I know it when I see it" family of definitions, but nonetheless should be fair game for ticketing since it is highly distracted driving under any reasonable standard.
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Others have suggested to me, and I echo the idea, that whenever a pedestrian or cyclist is hit by a driver, that it be mandatory to search the cell records of the driver of the vehicle.

There is a good reason why the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on December 13th of 2011 advised all states to adopt strict distracted driving laws. Connecticut along with New York was among the first to adopt laws regarding distracted driving. I know we can once again be a pioneer of advancing safety for all our citizens by allowing local, free enterprise to fill a dire need.

Respectfully submitted,

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